

Declaring Someone An Innovator

Shaykh Rabee' Ibn Haadee 'Umair Al Madkhalee

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Translated by: Abul Qayyim Ismaa'eel Ibn Yusuf

The issue concerning whether or not it is conditional to establish the proof upon an individual in order to declare him to be an innovator

Question: O our Shaykh (حفظكم الله), there is a question going around the students of knowledge regarding an individual who has fallen into an innovation. Is it conditional in order to declare him to be an innovator, that the proof be established against him first, or is this not required? Benefit us, jazaakaAllahu khayra.

Answer: "In the name of Allaah The Most Merciful, The Bestower of Mercy. All praise is due to Allaah and may the peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allaah, his family, companions and whosoever follows his guidance. To proceed:

That which is well known from Ahlus Sunnah is that whosoever falls into an affair that amounts up to Kufr (disbelief) then he is not to be declared a disbeliever up until the proof has been established against him.

(مكفر لا يكفر حتى تقام عليه الحجة من وقع في أمر)

As for someone who falls into an innovation, then he is from one of the following categories:

1) The first category:

Ahlul Bidah (The people of innovations); such as the Rawaafidh, the Khawaarij, the Jahmiyyah, the Qadariyyah, the Mu'tazilah, the Soofees, the Grave Worshipers, the Murji'ah and whosoever is attached and affiliated to them such as the groups 'Al Ikhwaan Al Muslimeen' and Jamaa'tu At Tableegh'. The Salaf did not make it conditional that the proof had to be established upon them in order to declare them as innovators.

(أجل الحكم عليهم بالبدعة لم يشترط السلف إقامة الحجة من)

So it is said concerning the Raafidhee that he is a 'mubtadi,' (an innovator), and likewise the Khaarijee is considered as an innovator etc, and this is the case whether the proof has been established against them or not.

(سواء أقيمت عليهم الحجة أم لا)

2) The second category:

This relates to someone from Ahlus Sunnah who fell into 'a clear innovation' (وقع في بدعة واضحة) such as the statement that 'the Qur'an has been created' or the statement of the Qadariyah or the opinion of the Khawarij and other than them. The likes of this individual is declared to be an innovator, and this is in accordance to the way of the Salaf (فهذا يبدع و عليه عمل السلف)

An example of this is demonstrated in that which has been narrated upon Ibn 'Umar, (رضي الله عنهما), when he was asked about the Qadariyah, he said: "When you meet those people then inform them that indeed I am free from them and they are free from me". (Collected by Muslim 8).

Shaykhul Islaam, (رحمه الله), said in his book, 'Dar'u T'aarud Al 'Aql wa An Naql', [vol 1, pg 254]:

"So the way of the Salaf and the Imaams of the past is that they would carefully consider and utilize the correct meanings that were confirmed by the religion and by the intellect. They would likewise carefully consider and utilize the terms and expressions that were confirmed by the religion, thus utilizing them in their speech whenever they could. So whosoever spoke with a term that contained a false meaning, thereby opposing the Book and the Sunnah, then they, (the 'Salaf' and the Imaams) would refute him. And whosoever came with an innovated term or expression that contained within it, truth and falsehood, then likewise they, (the 'Salaf' and the Imaams), would ascribe him to innovation as well, and they would say: "Indeed he has only confronted an innovation with another innovation, and has refuted falsehood with that which is false itself."

I say, (Shaykh Rabee'): This passage demonstrates some of the great and important affairs that the 'Salaf As Saaleh' would embark upon in order to protect and preserve their true religion. Likewise, the passage demonstrates the means of precaution that the 'Salaf' would take with regards to the dangers and calamities that may arise from innovations and mistakes.

From amongst these affairs...

Firstly, their severe warning against innovation, and their concern for the utilization of the correct terms and meanings affirmed by both the religion and the intellect. So, in as much as they were able to do so, they would never speak except with them. Likewise, they would never apply the correct terms and expressions except upon the correct meanings established in the religion.

Secondly, that they (the 'Salaf') were the guardians and protectors of the religion, so whosoever spoke with words that contained truth and falsehood thus opposing the Book and the Sunnah, then they would refute him. And whosoever spoke with an innovated term containing truth and falsehood then they would ascribe him to innovation even if he was refuting 'Ahlul Baatil', (the people of falsehood), and they, (the Salaf), would say: "Indeed he has only confronted an innovation with another innovation, and has refuted falsehood with that which is false itself." And this may have been the case, even if the refuter was from amongst the most virtuous of 'Ahlus Sunnah.' And they, (the Salaf), would never say: "Rather his 'Mujmal' (مجمّل - general and ambiguous statements) should be referred back to his 'Mufasssal' (مفصّل - detailed and explained ones) because we know him to be from 'Ahlus Sunnah'.

After the narration of this passage demonstrating the methodology of the Salaf and the Imaams, Shaykhul Islaam (رحمه الله) said:

"And from this, are well known stories, that which 'Al Khalaal' has mentioned in his book, 'As-Sunnah,' (and likewise other than him with regards to the issue of 'Al Lafdh', [the issue of one saying that my recitation of the Qu'ran is created], and the issue of 'Al Jabr', [the statement of those who say that man is compelled to do his actions].)"

I say, (Shaykh Rabee'): He, (Shaykhul Islaam), may Allah have mercy upon him, is referring to the Imaams of the Sunnah as being regarded as innovators those who say "My recitation of the Qur'an is created" because it is a statement that contains both truth and falsehood. Likewise, the statement of 'Al Jabr', (that man is compelled to do his actions), contains both truth and falsehood, and Shaykhul Islaam mentioned that the Imaams such as Al Awzaa'ee, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, and the likes of them held it as something blameworthy thereby rebuking both sides, both those who denied and rejected it, and likewise those who affirmed it. He, (Shaykhul Islaam), (رحمه الله) said: "And it has been narrated upon Az Zabeedee, Sufyaan At Thawree, 'Abdur Rahmaan Ibn Mahdee and others, that they used to dislike one mentioning the statement of 'Al Jabr' understood in a general sense. And Al Awzaa'ee, Ahmad and others than them said: "Whoever has said the statement of 'Jabr', then verily he has erred and whomsoever has said 'I am yujabbir', (referring to the negation of Al Jabr) then indeed he has erred. Rather it is said that: "Indeed Allah guides whomsoever He wills and misguides whosoever He wills etc.""

And they, (the aforementioned Imaams), used to say that the term, 'Al Jabr', did not have any basis neither in the Book nor in the Sunnah, rather the only expression that was contained in the Sunnah was 'Al Jibl' and not the word, 'Al Jabr.' For verily, it has been authentically narrated upon the prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he said to Al Ashajj 'Abdul Qais: **"Indeed you have two qualities that Allah loves: gentleness and patience."**

So he, (Al Ashajj 'Abdul Qais), said: "Did I learn to acquire them both, or am I naturally inclined towards them, '(jubiltu 'alaihimaal)?" The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) replied: "Rather you are naturally inclined towards them, '(Bal, jubilta alaihimaal)." So he, (Al Ashajj 'Abdul Qais), said: "All praise be to Allah Who created me and made me naturally inclined towards these two qualities that He loves."

And they, (the aforementioned Imaams) said that: "Verily the word, 'Al Jabr' is an ambiguous term, ('Mujmal')." Then he, (Shaykhul Islaam), made it clear that the meaning of the term, 'Al Jabr', on one hand, could have a true meaning, whilst on the other hand, have a meaning that is false. Then he gave an example for each of them, and said:

"So the Imaams prohibited the generalization of ones statement in affirming the term, 'Al Jabr', or in negating it because it was a bid'ah, (an innovation), thereby containing truth and falsehood."

Ad Dhahabee (رحمه الله) said: "Ahmad Ibn Kaamil Al Qaadee said: "Ya'qoob Ibn Shaybah was a faqeeh, (a scholar of Islaamic Jurisprudence), and he used to be from amongst the senior companions of Ahmad Ibn Mu'athal and Al Haarith Ibn Miskeen, but he took the position of 'Al Waqf', (an indecisive position with regards to the Qur'aan, demonstrating hesitation, neither openly professing the Qur'aan to be the speech of Allah uncreated, nor claiming it to be created)." "

Ad Dhahabee said: "I say: (Ya'qoob Ibn Shaybah) took his stance from his Shaykh Ahmad previously mentioned. And 'Alee Ibn Ja'd, Mus'ab Az Zubairee, Abee Israa'eel, and a group of others also held the same stance with regards to the Qur'aan, and thereby in doing so, opposed approximately one thousand Imaams.' Infact the rest of the Imaams of the Salaf and those who came after them, rejected the opinion of 'the creation of the Quraan', and they held the Jahmiyyah to be disbelievers (may Allah protect us in the Deen!)."

Abu Bakr Al Marwathee said: "Ya'qoob Ibn Shaybah made apparent his stance with regards to the Quraan, 'Al Waqf', whilst he was in Baghdad. So Abu 'Abdillah warned the people against him. And indeed Al Mutawakkil ordered 'Abdur Rahmaan Ibn Yahyaa Ibn Khaafaan that he should ask Ahmad Ibn Hanbal about the one who should be followed in Al Qadaa, (judgement and jurisprudence). 'Abdur Rahmaan said: "So I asked him, (Imaam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal), about Ya'qoob Ibn Shaybah. So he, (Ahmad), said: "He is a muftadi', (an innovator), and a person of desires!" "

Al Khateeb said: "His description and being referred to in such a manner was due to his statement of 'Al Waqf' (with regards to the Quraan)." [As Siyar, vol 12, pg 478].

Al Khateeb also mentioned the story about Dawud Al Asbahaanee Ad Dhaahiree, that he used to have a good relationship with Saaleh Ibn Ahmad. So once, he came to Baghdad requesting that Saaleh show some lenience towards him in his seeking permission to enter upon his (Saaleh's) father, (Ahmad). So Saaleh went to his father and said to him: "There is a man requesting permission to enter upon you." His father said to him: "What is his name?" Dawud replied "Saaleh." So his father questioned: "Where is he from?" Saaleh replied: "He is from the people of Asbahaan." So his father said, questioning further: "What do you make of him?" So Saaleh gave his father a brief introduction about him. So Abu 'Abdullah didn't cease scrutinizing him up until he realized and became well aware, and said: "Indeed, Muhammad Ibn Yahyaa An Naisaabooree wrote to me informing me about his, (Dawud Al Asbahaanee's), condition, that he claims that the Qur'aan has been created. So don't let him in!" Saaleh responded by saying: "O my father! He denies and rejects this!" So Abu 'Abdullah said: "Muhammad Ibn Yahyaa is more truthful than him. So don't give him permission to enter and approach me!" [Taareekh Al-Baghdaad, vol 8/p: 374].

The Third Category:

This relates to someone from Ahlus Sunnah, well known for his pursuit of the truth but fell into an unclear and unapparent innovation (وقع في بدعة خفية). So, as for the likes of this individual, if he has passed away, then it is not permissible to declare him to be an innovator (فلا يجوز تبديعه) rather he is spoken well of.

As for if this individual is alive, then he should be advised, and the truth should be made clear to him, and nobody should be hasty in declaring him to be an innovator (ولا يتسرع في تبديعه). However, if he is persistent upon his innovation, then yubadda, he is declared to be an innovator (فان أصر فيدع).

Shaykhul Islaam Ibn Taymiyah said: "And many of the rightly guided ones from amongst the Salaf and from those who came after them said statements and performed actions that amounted to innovation, but they didn't know that they were innovations, either due to their acting upon weak ahadeeth whilst considering them to be authentic or their lack of comprehension of certain verses of the Qur'aan, understanding from them that which was not actually intended, or due to their expression of an opinion in a certain issue of which no text (from the Qur'an or the Sunnah) had reached them. However if a person fears his Lord as much as he is able, then he is to be considered in the statement of Allah:

(ربنا لا تؤاخذنا إن نسينا أو أخطأنا)

"O our Lord, do not hold us to account for that which we have done out of forgetfulness and error."

And it has been narrated in a hadeeth that Allah said: **"I have responded."** And this has been explained in another place." [Ma'aarij Al Wasool, P: 430]

So in conclusion, it is not permissible to totally and absolutely call for the establishing of the proof upon ahlul bid'ah generally, and neither is it permissible to totally reject it.

(عموما و لا نفي ذلك فلا يجوز إطلاق اشتراط إقامة الحجة لأهل البدعة)

Rather the matter is how it has been explained.

So my advice to the students of knowledge is that they should hold on to the Book and the Sunnah and **have precision in the methodology of the Salaf in every aspect of their religion, especially in the areas relating to:**

'At Takfeer' – التكفير (declaring people to be disbelievers),

'At Tafseeq' – التفسيق (declaring people to be disobedient and rebellious sinners), and:

'At Tabdee' – التبديع (declaring people to be innovators in the religion).

This being the case such that it does not cause too much argumentation and quarreling in the likes of these issues.

And I strongly advise the 'Salafi youth' especially, that they should completely avoid all means that cause them to hold grudges against one another, and cause them to split, differ and become disunited, the very things that are hated by Allah, that which He, (Allah), the noble Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the virtuous Sahaabah and the Salafus Saaleh warned against.

Likewise, I strongly advise that they (the 'Salafi youth') strive and exert themselves in the means that bring about the feeling of love and brotherhood between themselves, the very things that are beloved to Allah and His messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

And may Allah send blessings upon our Prophet Muhammad and upon his family and companions.